# The Church League

## ITS NECESSITY AND ITS LIBERALITY

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# A Declaration and Testimony

ADOPTED BY

## The Church League of the Protestant Episcopal Church

*at a large Conference held in Holy Trinity Parish House, Philadelphia, on March 1, 1916*

"Issuing from the Reformation without the loss of her ancient heritage, and baptized afresh in the spirit of the New Testament, the character of our Church became what is now revealed in her name—the Protestant Episcopal Church.

"Confident in her possession of the historic creeds and maintaining her ancient ministry, comprehensiveness became her great characteristic.

"So much that is alien to her history and spirit is now being set forth in her name that loyalty demands of her sons a clear declaration of their allegiance.

"*First.*—We assert, therefore, our allegiance to the following principles:

"1. The sufficiency of the one sacrifice of Christ, and his sole mediatorship with God.

"2. The sacred right of the individual soul to an immediate approach to God in Christ.

"3. The supremacy of the enlightened conscience in the individual life as the final court of appeal.

"4. The supremacy of holy scripture as the test and warrant of Christian doctrine.

"*Secondly.*—We affirm our loyalty to the following truths, which are clearly indicated in the formularies of the church:

"1. The sacraments as the two alone ordained by Christ himself.

"2. The presence of Christ in the life of humanity, realized in experience and most tenderly realized, by faith, in the feast of His own appointment.

"3. The continuity of the ministry by an historic method as a fact of signal value and authority, and independent of any theories that may be imposed upon it.

"*Thirdly.*—In the face of the present demand, openly expressed by bishops and others, that our Church declare herself that there may be no mistake in her position, we affirm:

"1. This Church has declared herself on these points, historically, specifically and unequivocally.

"2. This Church's unique conception of comprehensiveness cannot be nullified by the effort to include what she has definitely excluded.

"3. This Church has made confident declaration of her position as a result of her belief in the guidance of the Holy Spirit and as a consequence of the characteristic use of sound learning.

"In no spirit of partisanship, but in simple loyalty to the church of which we are members, we invite all persons who, like ourselves, would preserve inviolate the heritage of Catholic and Protestant truth which is embodied in the standards of our church, to associate themselves with us in membership in the *Church League of the Protestant Episcopal Church* for the purpose of upholding and defending that sacred inheritance."

The following Resolution was also unanimously adopted:

"We, the members of the Church League of the Protestant Episcopal Church, believing in the fundamental principles of New Testament Christianity as expressed in the Creeds and in the Prayer Book and as re-affirmed and vindicated by the English Reformation, invite all churchmen to join with us in an educational campaign for the maintenance of these principles and in opposition to certain mediaeval and Romanizing tendencies within our Church which have been distinctively repudiated by this Church."

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It is a source of gratification to the members of the Church League that so many bishops, convention-preachers and editors have opposed this organization as a regrettable recrudescence of party spirit in our comprehensive Church. Nothing could have been more unfortunate than that its inauguration should be ignored, its pamphlets lying unread and its arguments regarded as futile. Such is the fate of movements out of touch with the needs of the day—of efforts to make the Seventh Day the Sabbath of the Churches, of the cult of St. Charles, the Martyr, of the endeavors of zealous enthusiasts to bring about a union between Canterbury and Rome. No one takes the trouble to point out the misconceptions and superstitions that lie at the root of such growths. We are content to let them wither gradually away in the uncongenial soil of America; they are plainly deficient in vitality.

The Church League, on the contrary, is evidently a vigorous movement that cannot be prudently neglected. The sound of its report has run to the ends of our country, and the answering echoes are coming back from many high places. It is particularly gratifying that some bishops have declaimed against it, and that the Bishop of Pittsburgh has made it the chief matter of his recent Convention address. In his famous controversy with Dr. Delane, the well-known editor of the *Times*, Mr. Cobden declared that experience and observation

had taught him that one of the essential conditions of a successful agitation was the pronounced and persistent opposition of the *Times*. Similar encouragement can be derived from the antagonism of bishops. There never was an important and far-reaching movement in our Church that was not greeted at its first appearance by salvos of counter-charges by bishops who believed in "standing pat."

It is, therefore, a matter of congratulation and hopefulness that the birth of this new society has not lacked these customary salutes.

The chief contention of our critics is that such a League is out of harmony with our traditions and status as a comprehensive Church. History is, however, clearly against this position. There have always been various schools in the Church, and each school has in its generation endeavored to impress its views upon the whole society. To the Church at Jerusalem St. Paul was a radical innovator, and the Judaizing Christians were to St. Paul corrupters of the gospel of the free grace of God. Arius and Athanasius had mutually repugnant philosophies of the Incarnation; Augustine and Pelagius directly contrary doctrines of free will and original sin; Wycliffe, Hus and Luther theories of the Church that were absolutely inconsistent with the claims of the Roman Curia. That Christianity should bring forth these different conceptions as it enters minds of diverse constitutions is as much a part of its nature, as it is the quality of the sunlight to paint the rose red, the violet blue and the crocus yellow. In the contests between these various modes of thought the largest and most fruitful conception, the one that possesses the greatest practical utility, and the greatest power of inspiration wins out and becomes the accepted view. Sometimes the adherents of the rejected doctrine withdraw from the main society, to protect what they regard as an essential of the faith.



In the English Church, where the standards were limited to the statements of the fundamental facts and beliefs, it was held that the Church was large enough to contain all who accepted the Apostles' Creed—provided that Romanizers were kept out of the ministry. This proviso was supposed to be safeguarded by the Thirty-nine Articles. In this national Church, therefore, there appeared soon after the Reformation a great variety of types. Each school regarded itself, inevitably, as expressive of the true and proper character of the Church of England, and each did its best to spread its views. The error of these schools did not consist in their definiteness and earnestness of conviction, or in their zeal to spread conceptions that were to them the savor of life unto life, or to confute theories that were to them the savor of death unto death. Their great mistake lay in their employment of force, of the pains and penalties of the civil law, in their appeals to prejudice, self-interest and passion, to defeat their opponents, instead of relying upon reason and conscience. Laud resorted to the Star Chamber and the Ecclesiastical Commission to harry the Puritans. Rectors deficient in zeal for souls and unduly in love with regularity endeavored to restrain the evangelistic ardor of the Wesleys and Whitefield by parish boundaries. Lovers of Evangelical modes of thought and expression sought to keep down the rising Tractarians by Episcopal authority. The Pentateuchal theories of Colenso, which contained so much that has proven helpful, were not subjected to examination and argument, but to vituperation and abuse, while Colenso himself was ecclesiastically ostracized.

All these methods, whereby the inculcators of truths sought to escape their proper task of teaching, explaining, illustrating and exemplifying their conception of the gospel and resorted to the carnal weapons of civil authority, or social and ecclesiastical ostracism, are properly condemned by liberal-minded

people who wish the religion of Jesus to be presented in the meekness of wisdom and in serene dependence upon reason. Everyone realizes that the cause of religion is injured by the use of force for the repression of opponents, by bitterness, by imputation of evil motives, by the substitution of the voice of authority for the arguments of reason. But surely no sensible person really thinks that religion is hurt by intelligent debate. Discussion has always been one of its chief methods of winning converts. "Come, now, and let us reason together," is the constant invitation of the messenger of the Truth. The true danger of religion is neglect, misconception, ignorance and indifference, not analysis, examination and earnest discussion.

An association of earnest-minded men for the purpose of impressing upon the mind and life of our Church their conceptions of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is so far from being opposed to the traditions of our Church's comprehensiveness that it may safely be asserted that it is through such associations that her comprehensive character has been attained and maintained. Our Church is what she is to-day because the Puritan clergy met together for mutual improvement; because the so-called Methodists banded themselves together in Oxford; because the Essayists and Reviewers united to publish their famous liberal brochures; because Newman, Pusey, Keble, Hugh James Rose and their confreres associated themselves to revive ancient and neglected doctrines and usages. It is extraordinary that the same men who praise these various movements, and are proud of the resultant variety of type within our Church, should cry out in reprehension when men of their own day band themselves together after such famous examples to maintain the truths they especially value. How can the zeal for truth that was admirable in our forefathers be discreditable and injurious in us?

Indeed, it is difficult to believe in the zeal for comprehension



of the Sacerdotalists who condemn this Protestant movement. If Sacerdotalists are really opposed to associations for the promulgation of special views, they ought to turn their guns upon the Catholic clubs, and upon an order like the Holy Cross Fathers, which, according to the biography of Bishop Potter, was originally inaugurated for the evangelization of the slums, but is now devoting its energies to the propagation of Sacramentarian theories as the sole authorized teaching of our Church. Let the Sacerdotal foes of party in the Church first take the beam out of their own eye, if they would see clearly to take the mote out of their brother's eye. Let them show their zeal against party spirit in a direction where their sympathy with the doctrines taught will make it plain that the opposition is not directed against the teaching, but against the means whereby it is spread. Silence as to these Catholic associations and invective against the Protestant organization inevitably creates the conviction that the true source of the opposition is not the League's methods but its message. So it comes to this, that we here have another instance of preaching without practising, the common theme of satirists from Juvenal to Walter Scott. "I left Baby Charles and Steenie laying his duty before him," says King James of the reprobate Dalgarno, "Oh, Geordie, jingling Geordie, it was grand to hear Baby Charles laying down the guilt of dissimulation and Steenie lecturing on the turpitude of incontinence."

But in truth we recommend to our Sacerdotal critics no such invectives against the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, or against Bishop Weller and Dr. Manning because of their resignation from the Board of Missions on account of the Panama Conference. The true spirit of comprehension does not endeavor to taboo people of other modes of thought, or seek to raise a prejudice against their organization. It realizes that not even the narrowest sect can escape a division into parties

or schools. Much less can a Church claim to be Catholic or Comprehensive, or Liberal and Progressive and treat such divisions as reprehensible. One of the great marks of a free country is the liberty its citizens enjoy to associate themselves with like-minded people to further common objects. Whether those purposes relate to the alteration of the Consitution or to the maintenance of existing conditions in the face of projected changes, it is all one. The parties may be mutually antagonistic, like Democrats and Republicans on the tariff, like Individualists and Socialists, but all are alike permissible, and all are regarded as in their degree useful. The same freedom must be possessed in the Church, if its members are to enjoy the liberty that is their portion as the children of God. After its members have complied with the terms of admission, they are entitled to stand on the same footing and enjoy equal liberty of organization. The theory that a true comprehensiveness is inconsistent with party organization in a church is as absurd as it would be to assert that a true American will not join either the Republican or Democratic parties. Such comprehension reminds one of the Roman peace, which Tacitus described as making a solitude and calling it peace. Such a liberty would be the kind of liberty that was enjoyed in lands where public worship was forbidden if not according to the use of the Established Church. No American would call such a church a home of freedom. There are, I regret to say, people who place peace above truth, and advocate conformity and silence as the means of peace; for the successors of the Vicar of Bray are always with us. One clergyman has bluntly announced that in a comprehensive church presbyters ought to subordinate their theology to the views of the Bishop as the divinely given leader. According to this theory, the clergy should change their message, chameleon-like, as they move from diocese to diocese or as the theology of their bishops may



vary. Loyalty to the truth is to be supplanted by loyalty to authority. Not many Americans will, however, approve principles that are so admirably exemplified by the movements of a weather-cock.

The more common error, especially among broad-minded people, is to regard association not as unlawful but as inexpedient and unnecessary. Such *laissez faire* people do not appreciate the necessity of organization for efficient action, or the tendency of the Sacerdotal theories to alter the entire constitution of our Church. With no inclination to Romish practices or doctrines themselves, these liberals do not appreciate the yearning of a certain class of minds for a church of the Roman type and the determination of the Sacerdotalist to assimilate the official teaching and ceremonial of our Church to the Roman pattern. The attitude of these liberals toward church politics and church teaching is one of aloofness and indifference. "What is the use of discussing such matters or haggling about these proposed changes?" they say. "There is surely room for a variety of types in a Church like ours. Let us not fall into error of magnifying non-essentials. We do not care to belong to any party."

Somehow or other this seems to have a specious sound when people are talking about religion; but no one would reason in this fashion about educational theories, or tariff reform, or the protection of the civil service, or the prohibition of child labor. For all these worthy objects we organize, reason and disseminate our views. If religious theories are important, they must be advanced in the same way. The Sacerdotalists understand this, and have their organizations, their Catholic clubs, their tracts, their literature of all kinds and their plan of campaign. In all this they act like men of courage and conviction. These would-be neutrals in the contest that is going on in the Episcopal Church ought to learn a lesson from the fate of Belgium.

Experience has shown that the Belgians ought to have taken warning frcm the long platforms in the German railroad stations on the confines of Belgium, and the structure of the railway lines in such a way that troops could be rapidly entrained and sent into their country. Heavy has been the penalty for such blindness and lack of preparation. And heavy will be the penalty paid by our liberally-minded and unenergetic members if they make no effort to check the spread of Sacerdotal views and the enactment of Sacerdotal legislation.

The truth of the situation needs to be frankly stated, and that is that the children of the Tractarian movement are dissatisfied with the Protestant features and the doctrinal reserves of our Church, and are determined to reconstruct her after another pattern. Only by the narrowest vote was the designation Protestant retained in our official title. In the publications of our Board of Missions it is persistently ignored. Many of our bishops announce their dislike of it. Our Church's official language as to the sacraments is not used, but the Romish theory of sacraments is advocated. It is well known that an effort will be made at the next General Convention to alter our Communion Service and make prayers for the dead an obligatory portion of that office. All these changes are to be made in order to make our Church officially declare herself in a way in which she has not hitherto declared herself. Let these modifications continue, and the whole character of our Church will be changed. We shall have reservation of the elements, confessional boxes in our Churches, confession required before Communion, and the reasonable ordinances of religion transmuted into the magic rites of superstition. The whole *ethos* of our Church will be altered.

To check this process the Church League does not design to set in operation the contentious machinery of the Church's



courts. Neither will it asperse the motives of the other school or undervalue their sincerity, zeal for the truth or Christian character. It will endeavor to speak the truth in love. But it will not shrink from speaking the truth because others do not like the message. It is liberal, but it does not regard all theories of religion as of equal value. It does not think it a proof of love or brotherliness to refrain from seeking to enlighten others, or a sign of loyalty to the Church to shirk the task of protecting it from error.

Pasteur was not an enemy of the medical profession nor a destroyer of its efficiency in its warfare against disease, nor an intolerant bigot, when he spent hours of his valuable time in endeavoring to prove to the physicians and scientists of France that the theory of the spontaneous generation of disease was a delusion. Many well-meaning friends used to remonstrate with him, as some Broad Churchmen are remonstrating with the Church League, and would ask him why he bothered himself to confute those mistaken views. But Pasteur appreciated better than such shirkers from the heat and dust of intellectual discussion, the true task of a teacher and pioneer. He kept up his arguments, his confutations, his debates, as well as his experiments, until he won his converts, and by their aid laid the basis of modern medicine.

We believe that what the world wants is a religion that relies upon the self-evidencing power of spiritual truth and makes little of external authority. A democratic age desires to have religion disseminated through a democratic organization. We believe that it is idle to talk of advancing the Lord's cause unless we also seek intelligently to fashion our Church into a fit instrument for that purpose, and to make the Church democratic in constitution and evangelical in doctrine.

Much might indeed be said about the way in which Protestant-minded people are being alienated from our Church by

the growth among our clergy of sacerdotal practices and teachings. We believe in law as the bulwark of liberty. The liberty of a rector to conduct the service as he pleases means the loss by the congregation of the right to worship God according to the use of their Church. In cities, where people can select their personal preference out of churches of various types, the assumption by rectors of the right to conduct the service according to their own taste may not inflict much hardship, though there are cases where self-willed rectors have wrought great havoc and injury. But in the country, and in small towns, where there is only one Episcopal Church, Sacerdotalist rectors, moulding the service of our Church into a more ritualistic pattern, have alienated many people and shattered many parishes. It is surely a brotherly act to insist that the rights of the worshipers should be protected against such unrestrained individualism, even if such self-will masks its true character by decrying Protestantism and advocating loyalty and obedience to authority.

The Church League does not, however, attempt to grapple with this difficult question through the Church courts. Let the contentious jurisdiction of the court only be invoked for offences against morals; let other questions be determined by candid discussion and the creation of public opinion. That is our great aim—the diffusion of knowledge, the moulding of thought. In order that public opinion may be educated, we intend to show the nature and extent of the Sacerdotal teaching in our Church, and the aims of that school. Take as an instance the Maundy Thursday service described in the following extract from the parish paper of All Saints, Dorchester, Mass.:

> "At the close of the Eucharist there followed a Solemn Procession of the Blessed Sacrament from the High Altar to the Altar of Repose in the Lady Chapel.



The procession was made up as follows: Cross, torches, banner, choir, cross, lights, banner, forty girls in white dresses and veils carrying flowers, crucifix, lights, acolytes, thurifer and boat bearer, the Celebrant in cope carrying the Blessed Sacrament, attended by the Deacon and Subdeacon vested in dalmatic and tunicle. The choir and the girls completely filled the Lady Chapel and the adjacent aisle with a kneeling host in white, *through the midst of which passed Our Lord in His Sacramental Presence*—all the while the choir and congregation singing the pathetic and soul-inspiring strain of the ancient and ever-glorious 'Pange Lingua.' *The Sacred Host enthroned*, the girls approached two and two and placed their flowers in a large vase upon the Sanctuary step, leaving them there, a beautiful floral offering to their Lord in the Sacrament of His Love. Palms, rose trees and roses and carnations in great profusion added their charm and beauty. The writer has seen wonderful sights in churches in all parts of the world, but he has never seen anything more beautiful than the sight in our Lady Chapel as the Sacred Host passed to the Altar throne waiting for its reception. The devotion of the prople was intense; several were moved to tears; all were thrilled by the reality of the Sacred Presence. The splendor of the scene was but the outward expression of the deepest devotion of heart and soul of the entire congregation. All day burned the fifty lights—all day burned the hearts of the devoted souls as they maintained the watch with their dear Lord. Large numbers spent some time there — priests, acolytes, faithful women, devout men, dear children —and some, the whole time. At the close of the

day the Vespers of the Blessed Sacrament were sung. The general consensus of opinion expressed has been that nothing has ever done more to deepen the spiritual and devotional life of the people of All Saints than this Maundy Thursday with its unusual and very great spiritual privileges."

Does anyone think that the clergy who introduce such ceremonials can be trusted to preserve the liberal character of our Church? Are not such theatrical and emotional services calculated to break down the nexus between religion and conduct that was one of the chief benefits of the Reformation? Is not such a localizing of Christ in the elements liable to alienate reasonable people from religion? If such services can be inflicted by a rector upon a congregation without any protection on their part against such innovations by rubric or canons of any kind—is not such liberty for rectors the bondage of the congregation?

I should not care so much for these extravagances of Latin theology and devotion, though I regard them as out of place in a Church that definitely rejected them, if these people were content to practice such services on their own authority. Our real trouble is that the Sacerdotal school is steadily working to set its stamp upon the whole organization. Having gained a place among us under the plea of toleration, like the camel in the shoemaker's tent, it will crowd out the Protestant element, if its aggressions are not checked. With great difficulty does our Communion office keep the mass out of the chapels of some of our sisterhoods. Constant and insistent is the cry of the Sacerdotalists that they alone truly represent the mind of our Church. Deeply imbedded in the very heart of this system is its demand for the subjugation of the mind and will of the individual to Churchly authority. Its profoundest aspiration



is to shape our Church into another pattern, and to exchange its discreet reserves and reverential silences, for emphatic and definite utterances after the Roman pattern. It is our belief that unless the Protestant element can make itself felt more effectively in our Church's life, such will be the result of the growth of the Sacerdotal school. The Protestant Churches will go on their way, as they have done in Canada, consolidating and growing closer together, and we shall be left out in the cold, a Church of the Reformation era that has lost her heritage, a mere reactionary eddy in the current of life, and the world will have to seek elsewhere for that sane and ethical temper, that close adherence to Scripture and reason, that dignity, self-restraint, and judicial moderation that has made the Protestant Episcopal Church the creator of such beautiful types of character, and so effective an instrument for upholding the Gospel and the Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

CARL E. GRAMMER.